
OLR BILL ANALYSIS

sHB 5262

AN ACT CONCERNING EQUESTRIAN USE ON CERTAIN TRAILS ON STATE PARK AND FOREST LANDS.

SUMMARY:

By law, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) commissioner must designate trails in state parks and forests for horseback riding (CGS § 23-10c). Current law specifies certain trails that must be preserved for equine use (CGS § 23-10e).

This bill requires the DEEP commissioner to allow equestrians to use all, instead of designated, multi-use trails in state parks and forests, unless he specifically prohibits such use. It requires that before he decides to prohibit equestrians from a trail historically used for that purpose, he must consult with the Equine Advisory Council. This council was created by law in 2007 to help DEEP study the issue of preserving equine trails in Connecticut.

The bill stipulates that (1) it does not prohibit other public uses of the trails and (2) DEEP's action is not to be considered an expansion of the trails. It also explicitly allows the commissioner to temporarily close a multi-use trail for safety reasons or to protect natural resources.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2012

SPECIFIED TRAILS UNDER CURRENT LAW

Under current law, the commissioner must preserve the following trails for equine use:

1. Larkin State Park trails (Middlebury, Oxford, and Southbury);
2. Airline State Park trails – south and north (Colchester, Hampton, Hebron, Lebanon, Pomfret, Putnam, and Windham);
3. Hop River State Park trails (Andover, Bolton, Columbia, and

Coventry);

4. Moosup Valley State Park trails (Plainfield and Sterling);
5. Huntington State Park trails;
6. Natchaug State Forest trails; and
7. Cockaponset State Forest trails.

Such preservation does not prohibit nonequine uses of the trails and is not considered an expansion of them.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 29 Nay 0 (03/14/2012)